

POST-PENINSULAR MALAYSIA PASTORAL CONVENTION IV PASTORAL STATEMENT

BY THE ARCHBISHOP AND BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA

Dear People of God,

“Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Tim 1:2).

On this First Sunday of Advent, we give thanks and praise to God for all the graces and blessings received this past year and for the hope that He instills in us as we begin a new Liturgical Year 2017. The Church in Peninsular Malaysia has just concluded the Fourth Peninsular Malaysian Pastoral Convention (PMPV IV) from the 2 – 5 October at Majodi Centre, Plentong, Johor after our respective Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly and Diocesan Synods in May 2016. It was indeed a spirit-filled experience, a **“New Pentecost”**, being in communion with the six hundred and eighteen participants, comprising of Archbishops, Bishops, Clergy, Religious and Laity including guests from Sarawak. We are truly grateful to God for this opportunity in answering the call for renewal initiated by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) followed by the *Aggiornamento* (1976), PMPC (1986), PMPC II (1996), PMPC III (2006) and the recently concluded PMPC IV (2016). There is no denying that the Church in Peninsular Malaysia has experienced integral and even significant growth in this past forty years marked by different milestones and imbued with new challenges within the Malaysian realities.

Through the process of listening to the Holy Spirit expressed by listening to the word of God and to one another, we can now face the new challenges with a spirit of openness as we honestly and courageously re-examine ourselves and seek ways to stand out as Church and make a difference. As an outcome of this journey, we as Church need to look at the coming decade with a renewed mind and heart, going out of our ‘comfort zone’ and being the voice and conscience of society as we read and discern the signs of the times so that the Church in Peninsular Malaysia can actively seek to be the catalyst for transformation and change in a more proactive way.

As Malaysians, we must also engage, work and support others to respond energetically to the changing and challenging times through the integration of our faith into life and since they are one reality, there can be no separation between the secular and sacred. We must aim and strive towards building a nation founded on a spirit of integrity – personal, spiritual, political, financial, and ecological integrity, and therefore, commit ourselves to work with all Malaysians who want to see a more integrated Malaysia.

In addition, the changing face of the Malaysian Church calls for a renewed vision and mission. We cannot just be contented within the ‘walls of the Church’. Pope Francis encourages us in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, “mission is at once a passion for Jesus and a passion for his people” (EG 268) and “let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary enthusiasm and the joy of the Gospel!” (EG 80, 83). Hence, our mission must be of becoming a listening, discerning and prophetic Church, where we are then propelled to be **creative, inclusive** and **bridge-building** in our pastoral vision and mission. The process of *dialogue, discernment* and *deeds* must ultimately lead us towards a ‘paradigm of integral evangelisation’: (a) witness of life; (b) service to humanity; (c) interreligious dialogue; (d) explicit Gospel proclamation; (e) prayer, liturgy and sacraments.

Over the past forty years we have grounded ourselves in building our Church through our Basic Ecclesial Communities and giving priority to the areas of Unity, Formation, Integral Human Development, Interreligious Dialogue, Youth, Family Life, and Social Communications. We now need to go further, dig deeper, and act holistically in these areas and beyond for the Church to remain relevant and effective for the sake of the kingdom of God.

We, therefore, call on the People of God (Clergy, Religious, Laity) to move towards becoming missionary disciples of hope so that our parishes can truly be the 'face of Jesus' in society. Even amidst challenges, fear, and despair, the Church must be a beacon of hope and lifegiving not only to Christians but to everyone. We urge that all our ministries find concrete ways to help restore hope in God and in humanity and supported by this spirit of *creativity, inclusivity* and *bridge-building* in our pastoral mission. As we light the first candle on the Advent wreath today, let us re-commit ourselves once again to be faithful to this mission of the Church in Peninsular Malaysia.

On our part, as shepherds of the Church in Peninsular Malaysia, we are also committed to support and carry out in our respective Archdiocese and Dioceses the recommendations put forward at PMPC IV for it was indeed an experience of a "**New Pentecost**". St. Paul, in the Letter to Timothy states, "*For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands*" (2 Timothy 1:6). Through the laying of hands, which we have received through the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders and Anointing of the Sick, we have all been empowered and sent on a mission. Therefore, we urge and invite all of you to heed this call of St. Paul as we together implement and live the directions set forth by the PMPC IV in the next decade (2016-2025) with vigour and joy. Be disciples of Hope and may Mary, the Mother of Mission, pray for us!



Most Rev. Julian Leow
Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur



Rt. Rev. Sebastian Francis
Bishop of Penang



Rt. Rev. Bernard Paul
Bishop of Malacca Johore

Given on the First Sunday of Advent, 27 November 2016